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Relatively Speaking

PART 1

...THEN, AFTER THE BAKERY UNEXPECTEDLY RAISED THE PRICE OF THE PRINCESS' BIRTHDAY CAKE, GENERAL CHONG FILED A FORMAL PROTEST WITH THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES.

THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF THE DREAD KOROBOROMITSU CLAN.

RECOGNIZING THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND THE PRINCESS' EXALTED STATUS, THE MAGISTRATE AND HIS ADVISORS... ER... PLACED THE MATTER UNDER INTENSE ADVISEMENT AND ADJOURNED TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL CARP AND WINE FESTIVAL.

STORY: MARK BARNARD
ART: TERRIE SMITH
LETTERS: GLEN WOOTEN (ASSIST)
TONE: MICHAEL COGLIANDRO

AT THIS POINT, THE GENERAL WAS HEARD TO SAY, 'WELL, HECK. LET'S JUST GET SOMETHING FROM THE DISCOUNT SECTION. SHE'LL NEVER KNOW THE DIFFERENCE...'





'NEVER KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?!??!' I AM A PRINCESS! SUCH CHEAP GOODS WOULD SURELY KILL ONE AS DELICATE AS I!!!



GENERAL, THIS IS TREASON MOST FOUL!



TAKE THIS WORM TO THE DUNGEONS AND MAKE HIM SUFFER FOR HIS CRIMES!

WHADDA' YOU TRYING TO DO? KILL ME?? I SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH! PAINFUL, LINGERING DEATH! NOW! NOW! NOW!

SIGH.

AND SOMEBODY BRING ME A CLUPCAKE.



SNIFFLE! IT'S NOT EASY BEING A PRINCESS.



COME ON, YOU!



SOO...THE OFFENCE THIS WEEK IS BAD BAKERY GOODS? JUST SO I CAN KEEP MY RECORDS STRAIGHT, YOU UNDERSTAND.

SHE SHOULD COMPLAIN! BY GETTING IT 'DAY OLD,' I SAVED HER HALF A CREDIT. THE WAY BUSINESS HAS BEEN LATELY, WE NEED THE SPARE CHANGE.

BESIDES, I THOUGHT THE HAPPY, PINK 'MALLOW CHICKIES WERE A NICE TOUCH...

MONEY! <SNORT> TELL ME ABOUT IT. EVERY MONTH IT'S, 'OH, WE'LL GET YOU A NEW RACK, BOBO-SAN. JUST BE PATIENT!' OR 'COULDN'T YOU JUST SLAP THEM REALLY HARD?'



WHERE'S THE TERROR IN THE PUNISHMENT OF THE REALLY STERN SHAKING? NOW, I ASK YOU!

THE USUAL RATE?



SURE. ER, DOESN'T SHE EVER WONDER ABOUT YOUR MIRACULOUS REAPPEARANCES?



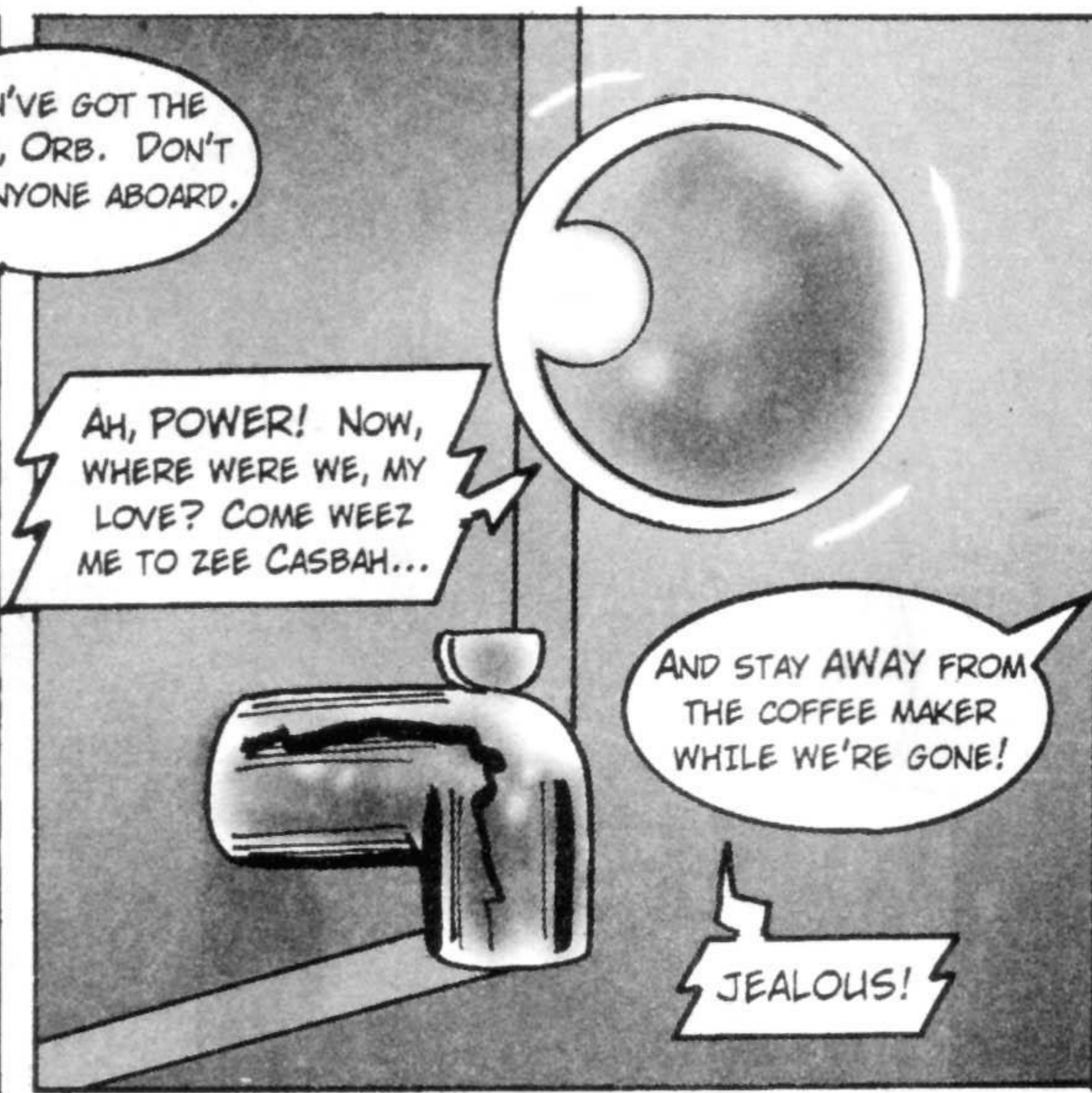
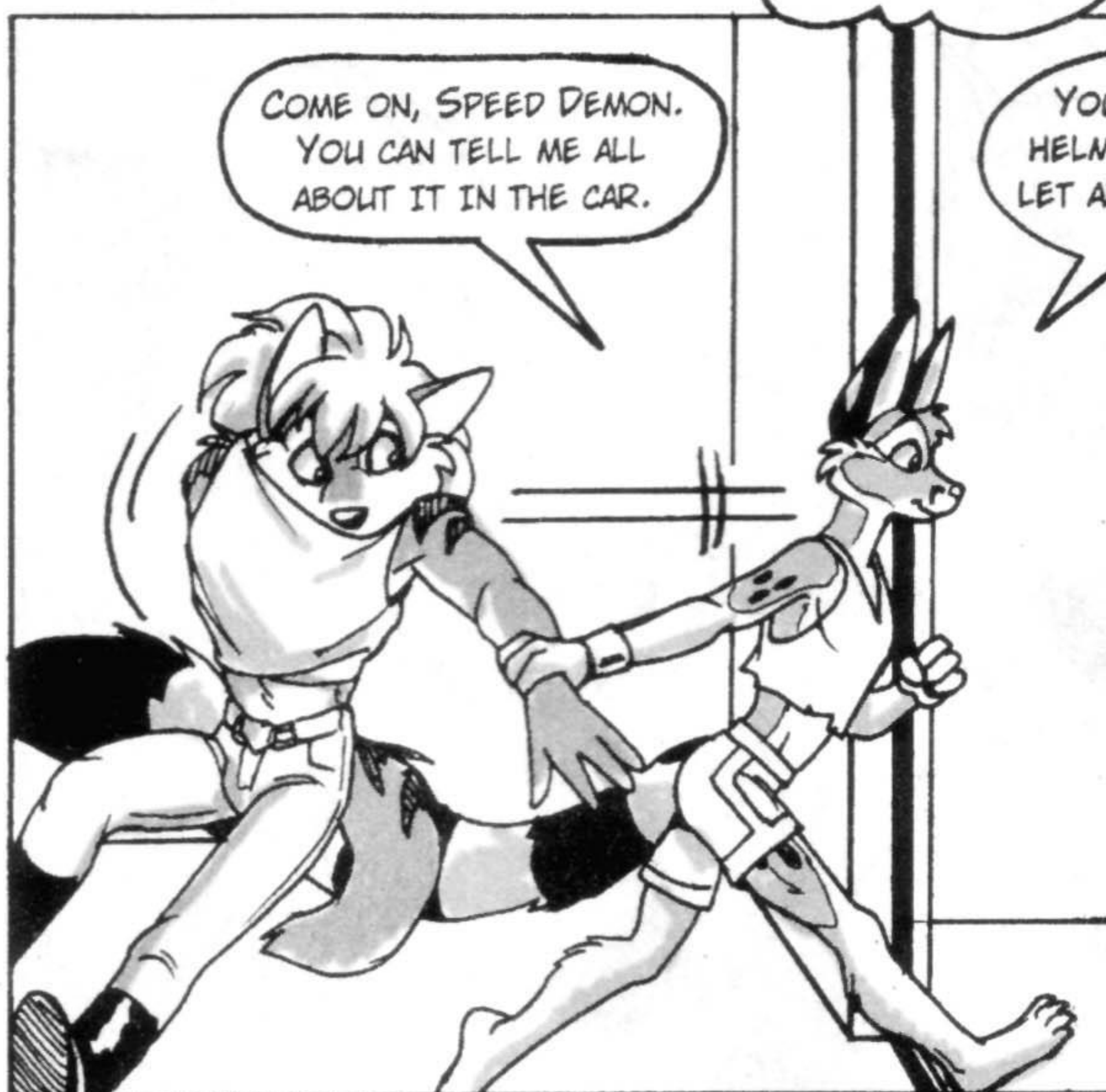
NO. I CONVINCED HER IT WAS A SIGN FROM ABOVE THAT I'M THE CLAN'S ONE TRUE MILITARY GENIUS. THAT USUALLY HOLDS HER FOR ABOUT A WEEK AT A TIME.

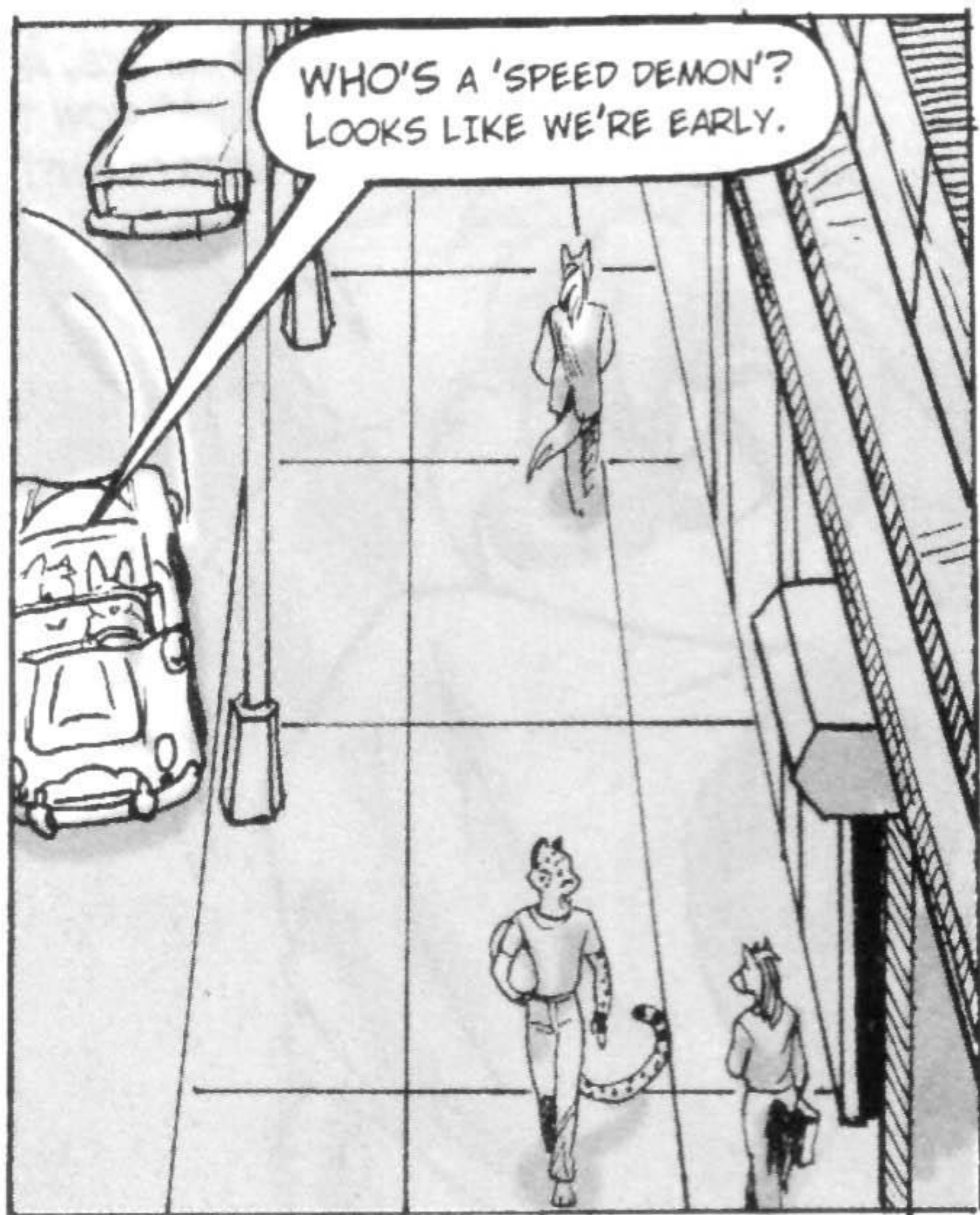


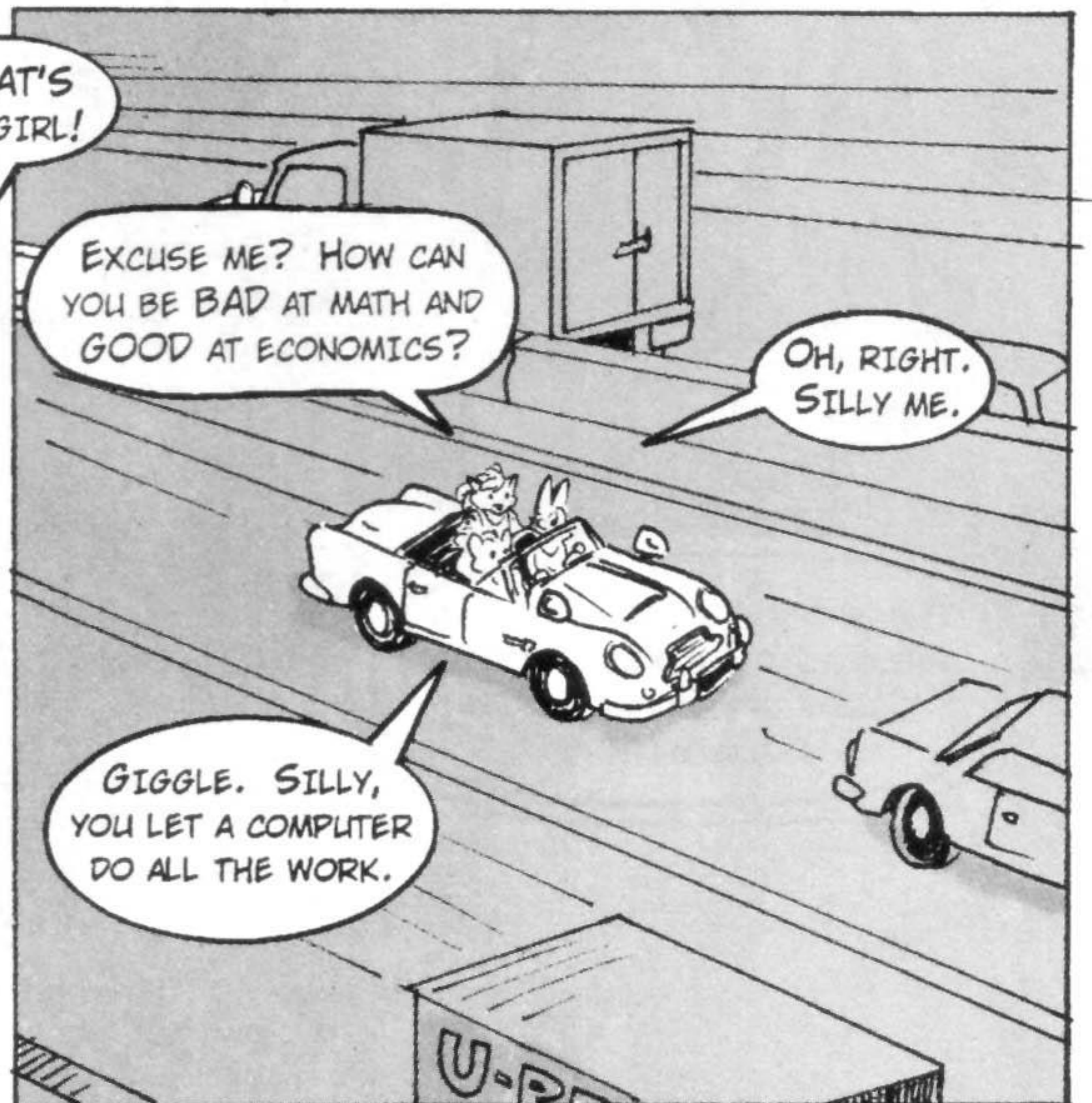
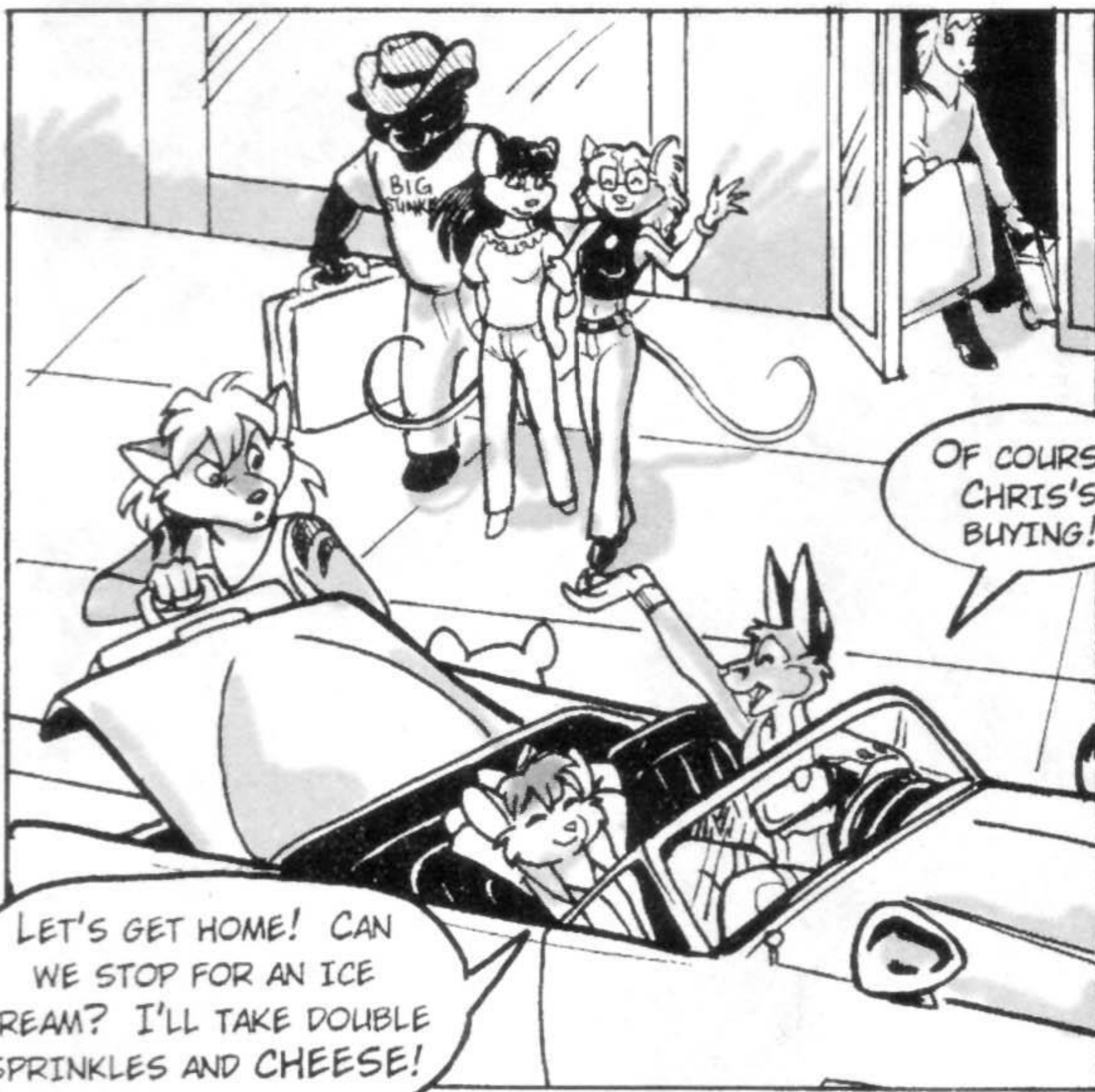
OKAY. SEE YOU NEXT WEEK, THEN?

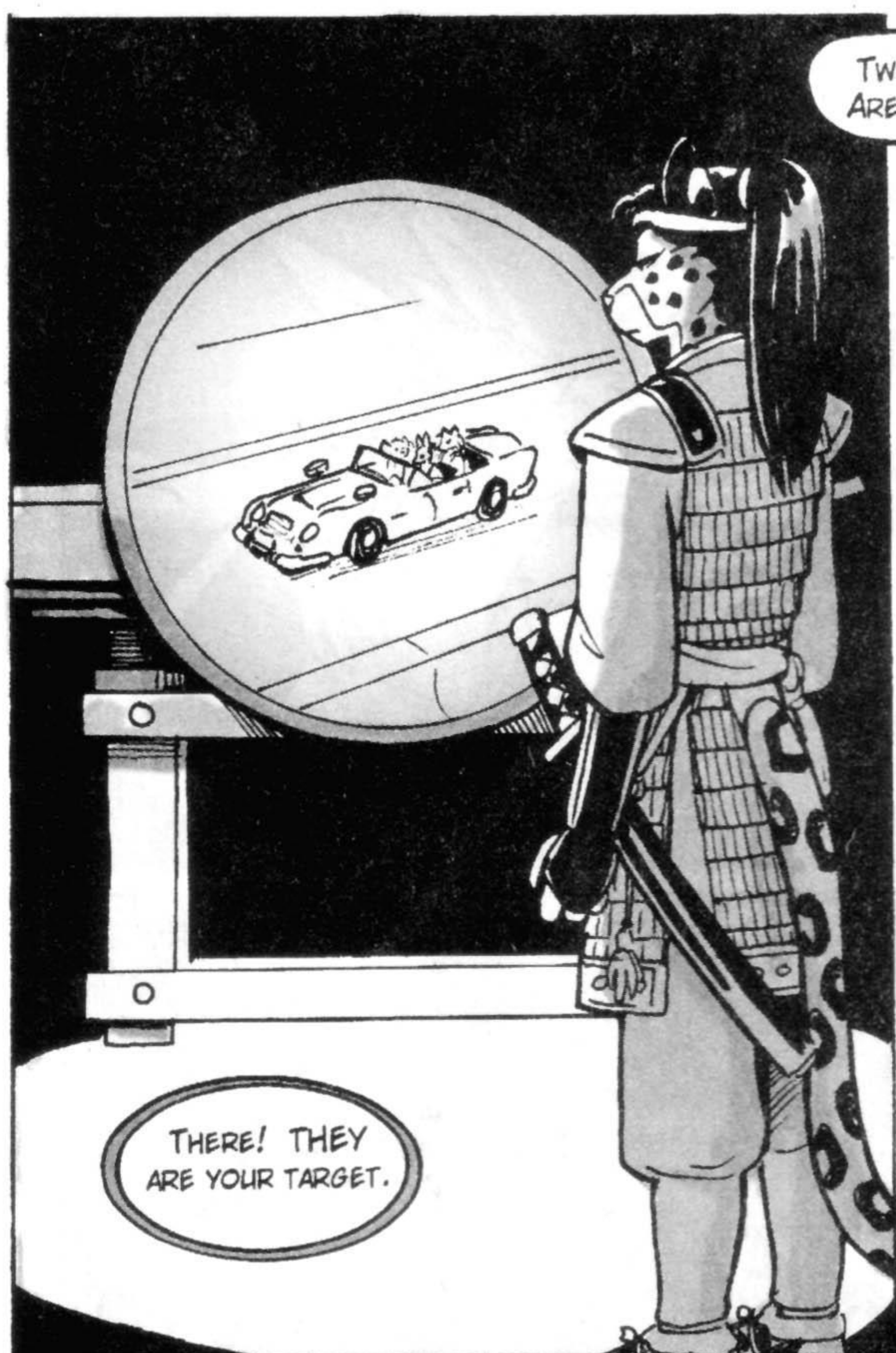
LIKE CLOCKWORK.



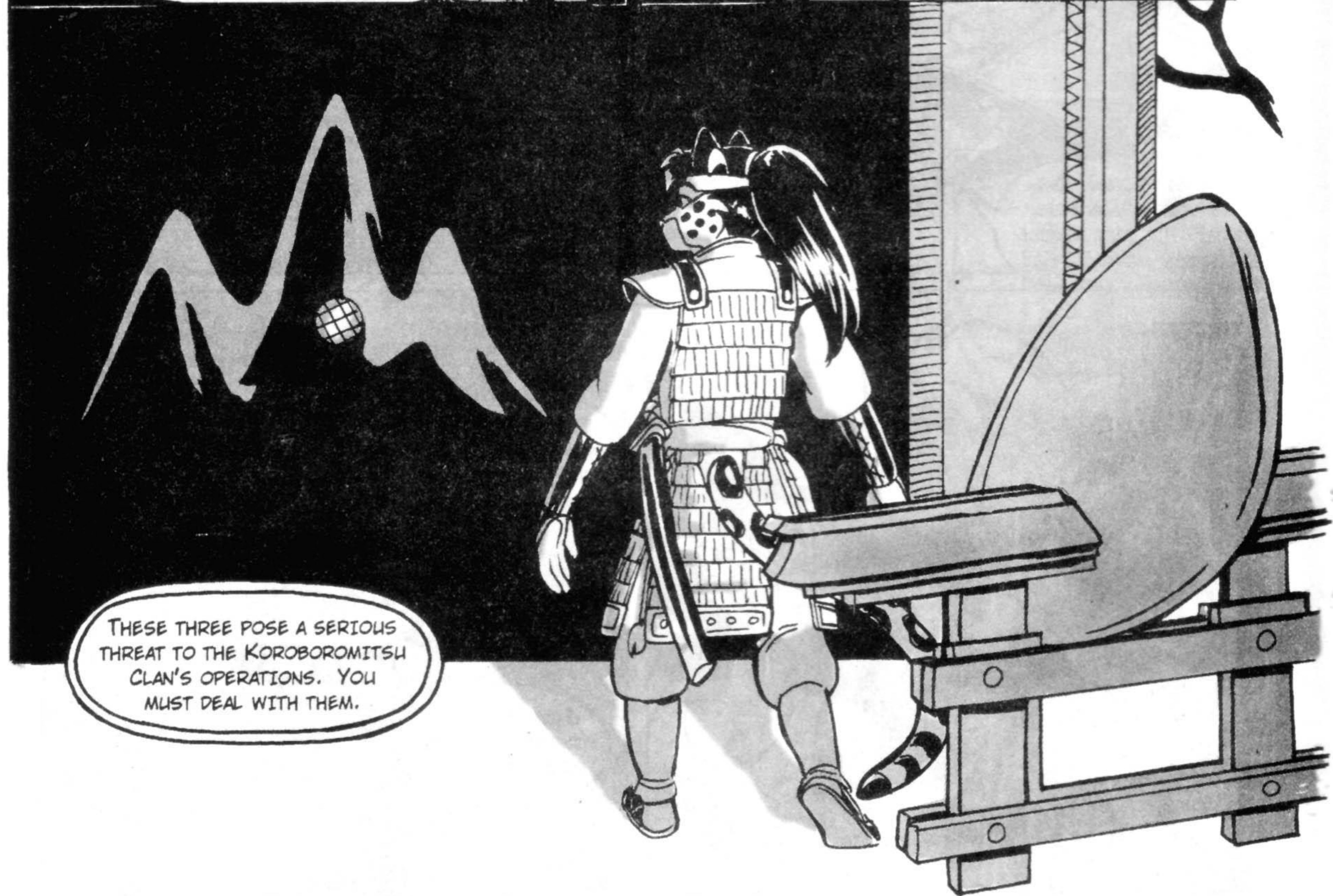








TWO SPACERS AND A GIRL?
ARE YOU SURE OF THIS...?





I SHOULD KILL THEM?



NOT UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO.



YOU MERELY HAVE TO KEEP THEM FROM LEAVING THE PLANET UNTIL OUR AGENTS CONCLUDE THEIR BUSINESS ON THE SECOND MOON.

THE TWO SPACERS ARE KNOWN TO US, AND THEY HAVE A BOTHERSOME HABIT OF INTERFERING WITH THINGS THAT DO NOT CONCERN THEM.

NOW GO! RALLY YOUR FORCES AT ONCE!

OW! I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS. NOW WHERE AM I GOING TO FIND AN ARMY ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE?

STUPID LIGHT!



WHAT WAS THAT?

OH, NOTHING.





AND THAT'S HOW THE UNIVERSAL GOVERNMENT KNIGHTED ME FOR VALOROUS SERVICE. OF COURSE I KEPT CHRIS ON AS MY SQUIRE! NO SENSE IN CASTING THE POOR WRETCH LOOSE TO WANDER FORLORNLY...

WELL, WE KNOW HE COULDN'T GET ALONG WITHOUT YOU!

LAUGH IT UP, FUNNY BOY! SOONER OR LATER, YOU HAVE TO SLEEP...



WELL, LET'S GET ROLLING. WHERE'RE THE COMPANY BOOKS?

ER...FIRE! BAD FIRE! LOST ALMOST EVERYTHING!

UH-HUH. RIGHT. FORK 'EM OVER!



YOU'D BETTER STOW LAMBIE'S GEAR IN THE SPARE CABIN. WE'LL GET STARTED HERE.



CHESTER! DON'T ENCOURAGE HER!

RELAX! WE'LL RUN OVER A FEW OF THE ACCOUNTS WHICH ARE ALMOST BALANCED. OFFICE SUPPLIES, POSTAGE. THEN WE'LL DISTRACT HER. GO, GO!



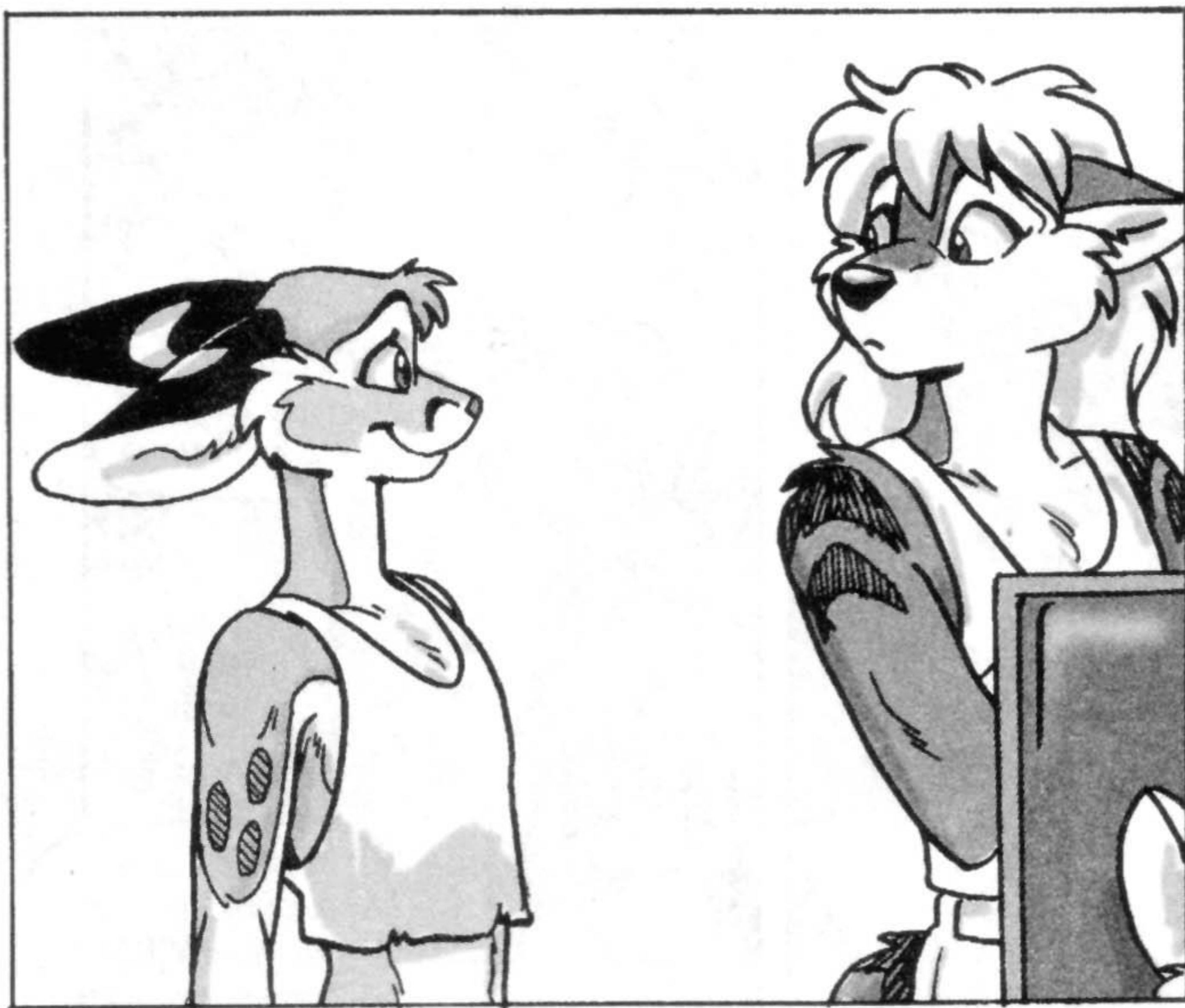
IT'S JUST THAT I'M NOT SURE WE HAVE ANY ACCOUNTS THAT'RE ALMOST BALANCED!

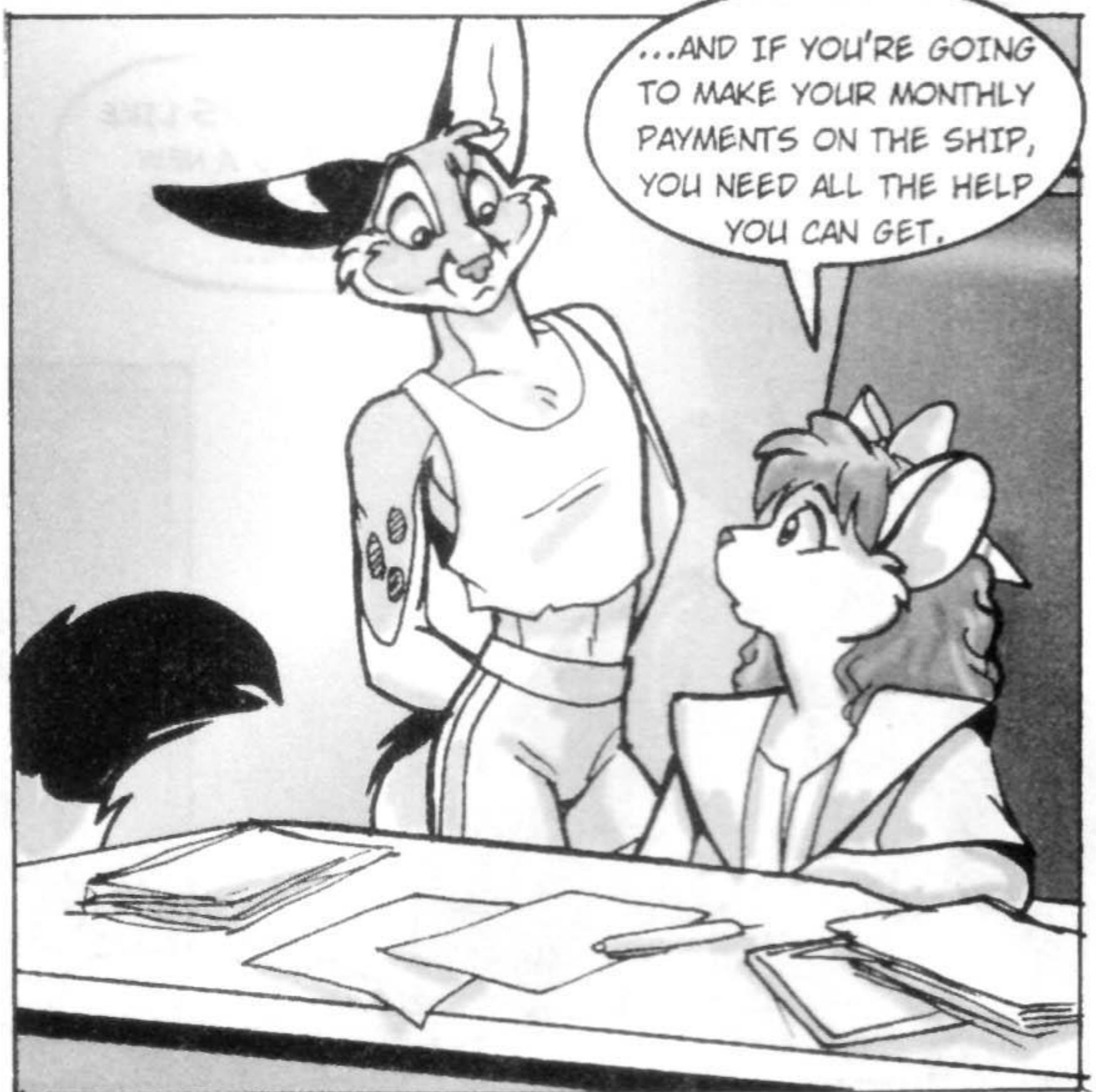
DETAILS, DETAILS!

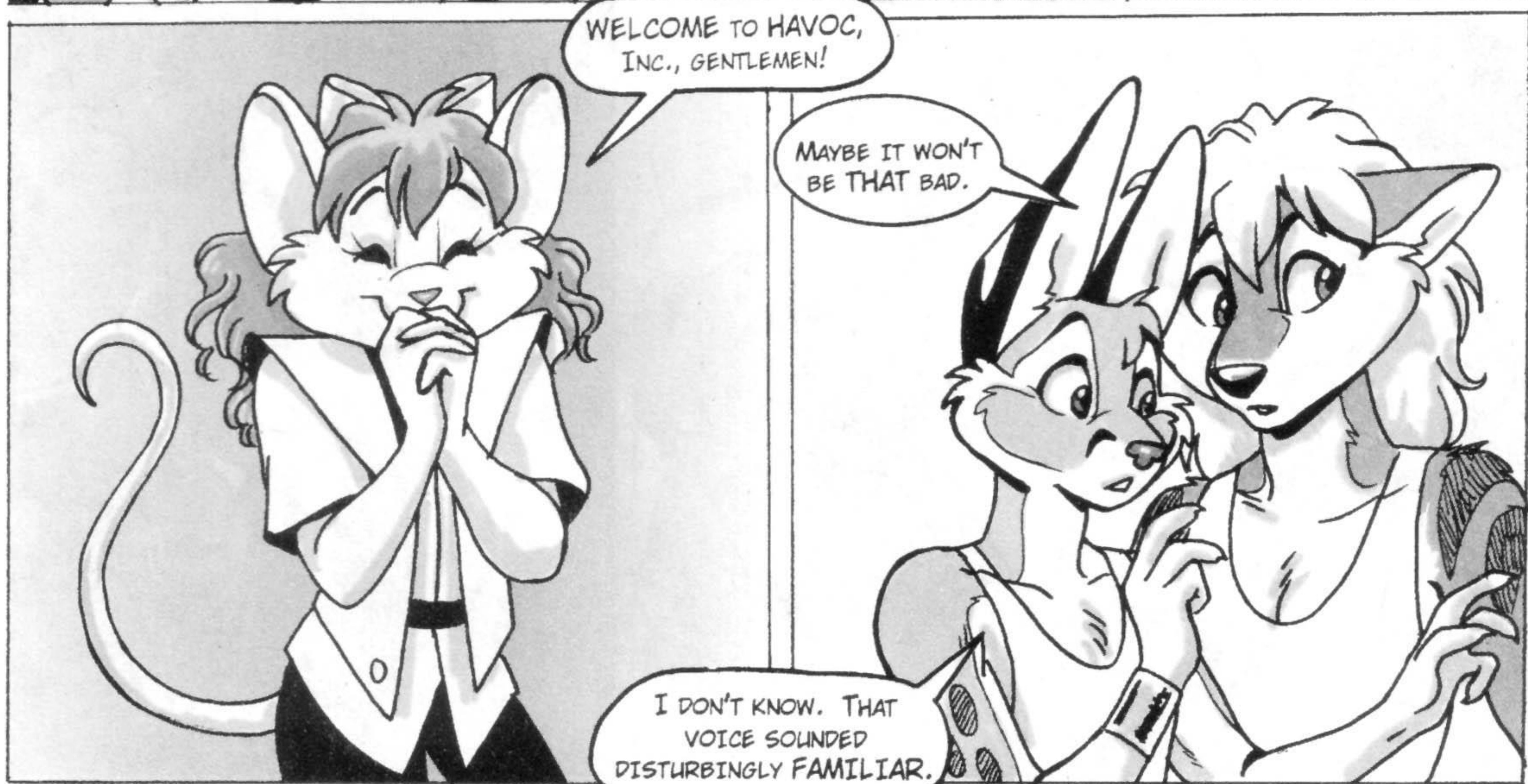
GOOD GRIEF! THIS ONE IS MARKED 'THIRD NOTICE'!













WELL, JUST AS LONG
AS IT'S NOT SOMEONE
OBNOXIOUS...



HI'YA GUYS! BOY, YOU'RE
HARD TO TRACK DOWN, BUT THE
YOUNG LADY OFFERED ME A 10%
FINDERS FEE. HEH-HEH.
COULDN' SAY NO, I TELL YA'!



ER, HI,
MUMBO.

'AFTERNOON, POOCH.
PICK A CARD! ANY CARD!



GET THIS LOW-LIFE OFF
THE SHIP BEFORE HE
STEALS US BLIND!

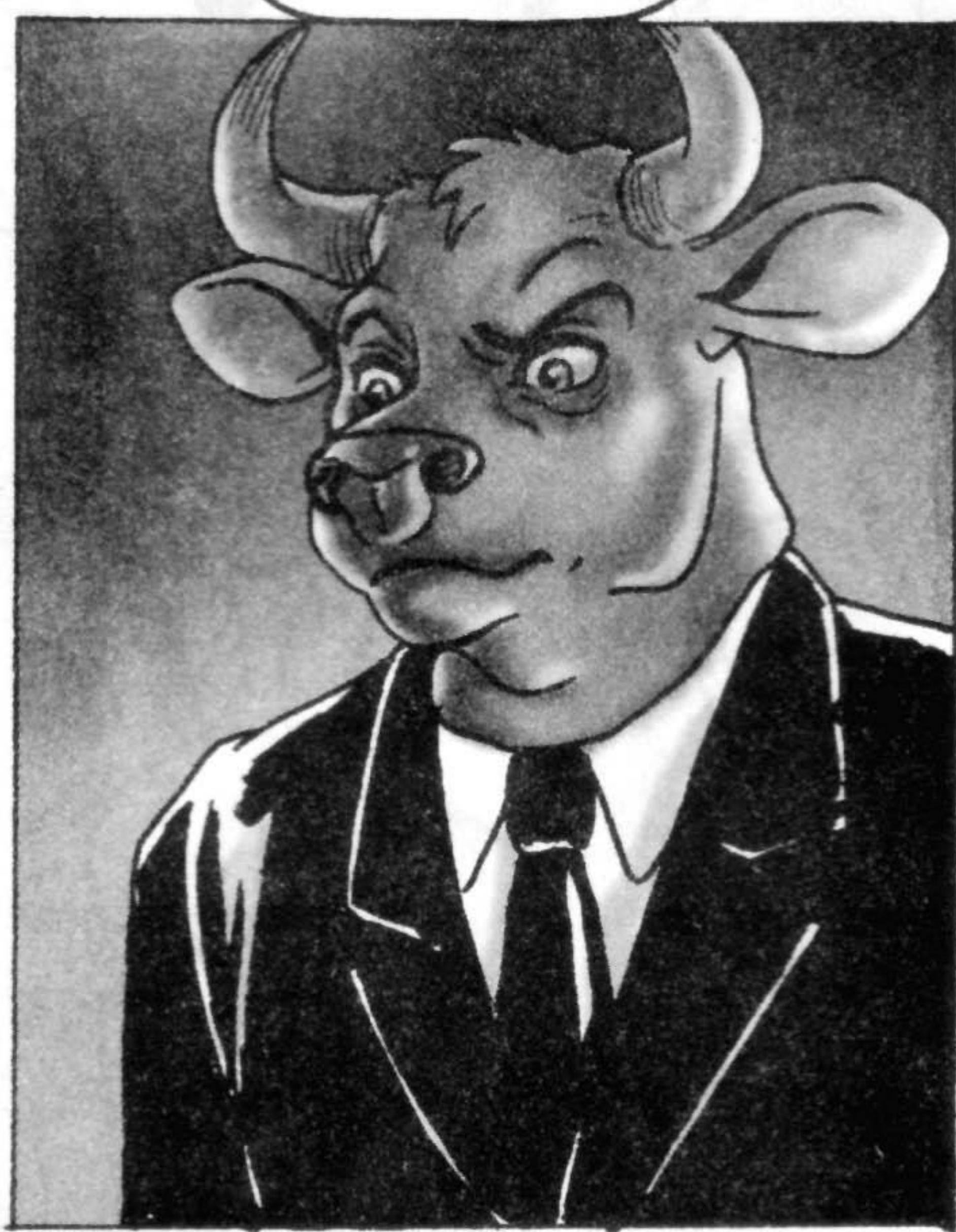
TALK ABOUT THE POT
CALLING THE KETTLE
BLACK...

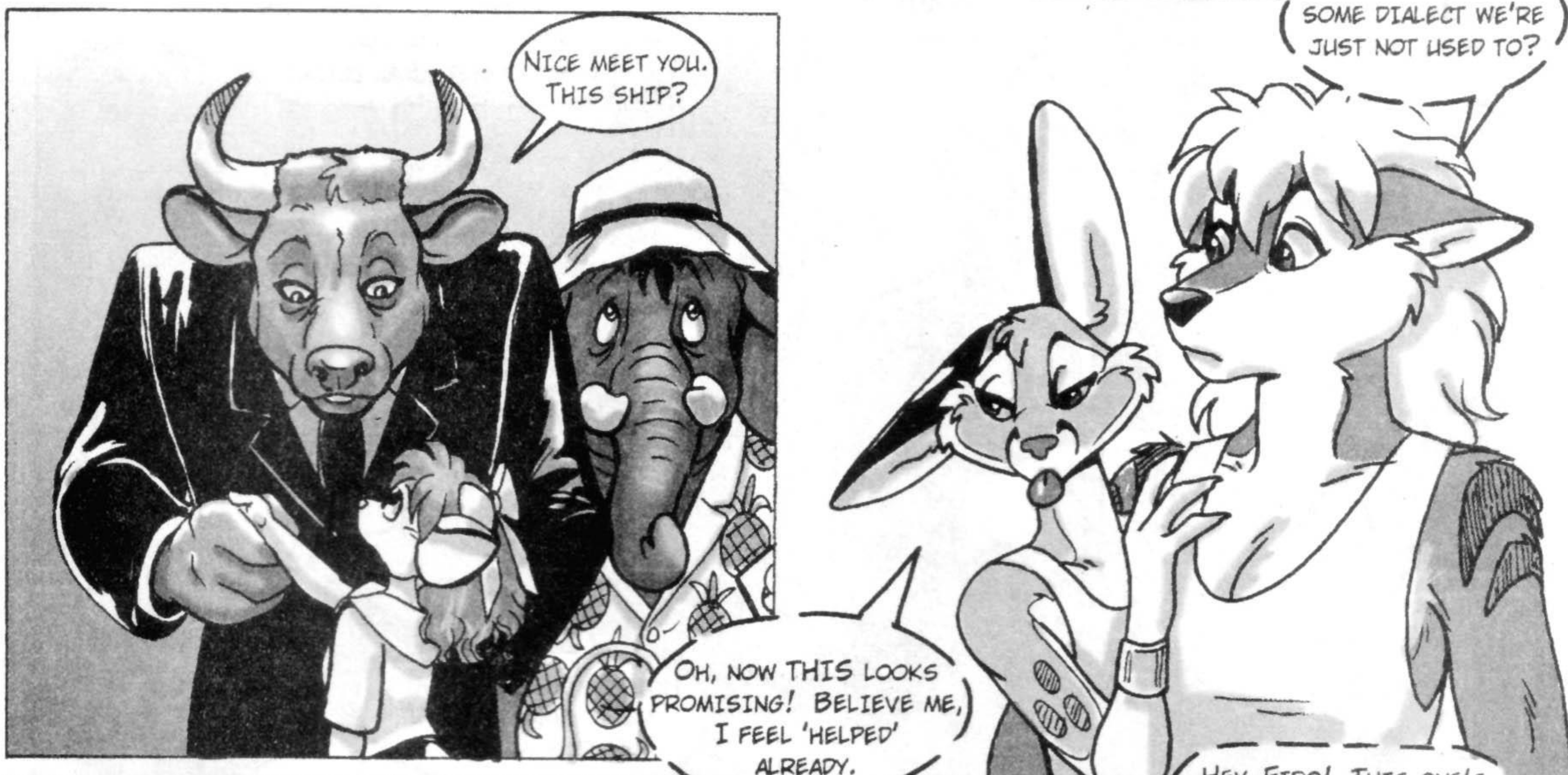


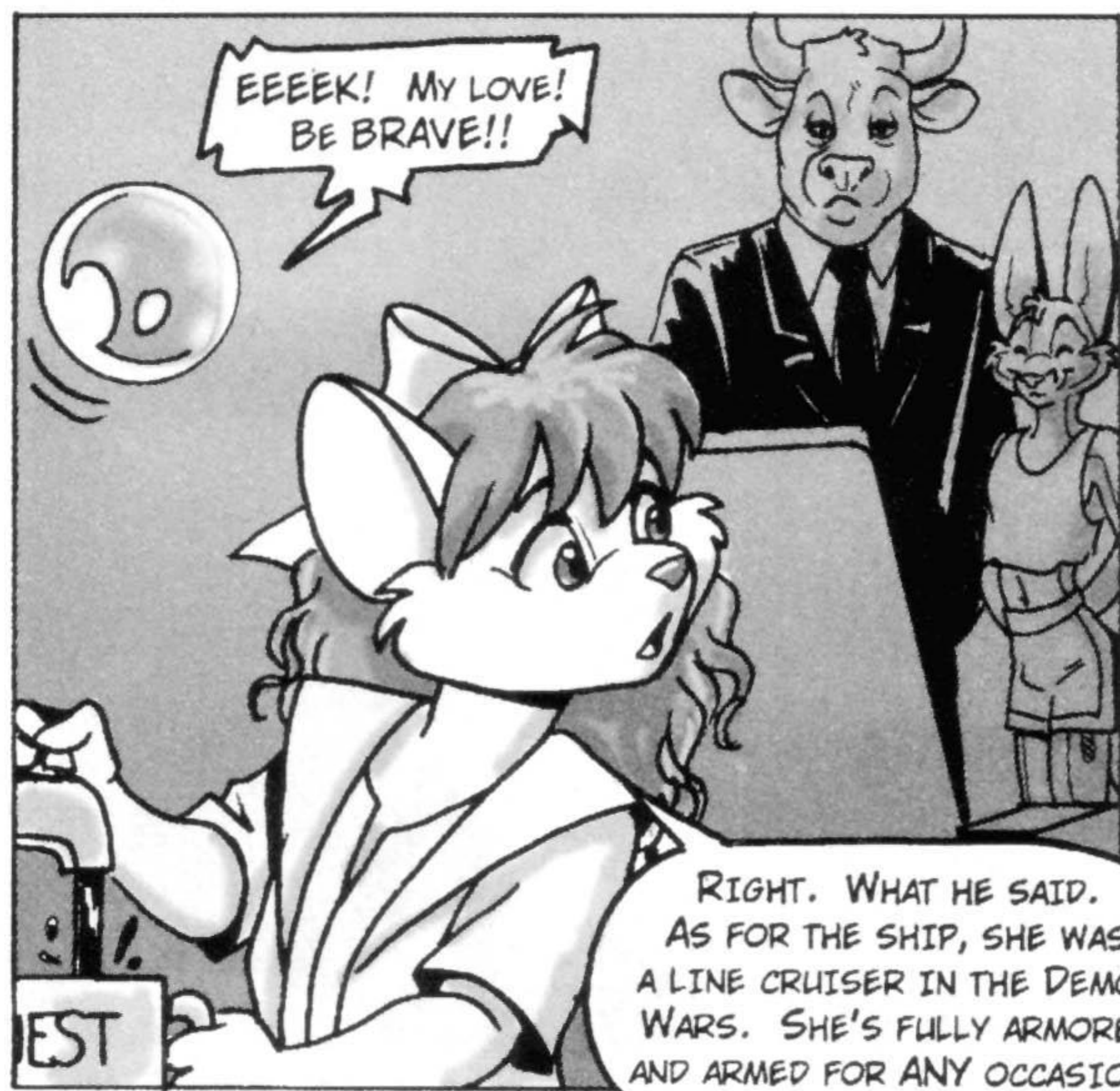
FOUR OF SPADES!
IS 'AT A CARD TRICK,
OR IS 'AT A CARD TRICK?!

AHM!

MOMMY, MAKE THE
BAD MAN GO AWAY!
HE SCARES ME!









'CHECK'?



PAPER WITH
NUMBERS ON IT?



PAPER! RIGHT!
I GOT!



HERE IS PRINCELY
FEE REQUESTED.



THIS WILL DO NICELY.
WHERE'S YOUR CARGO?
WE CAN LOAD IT NOW.

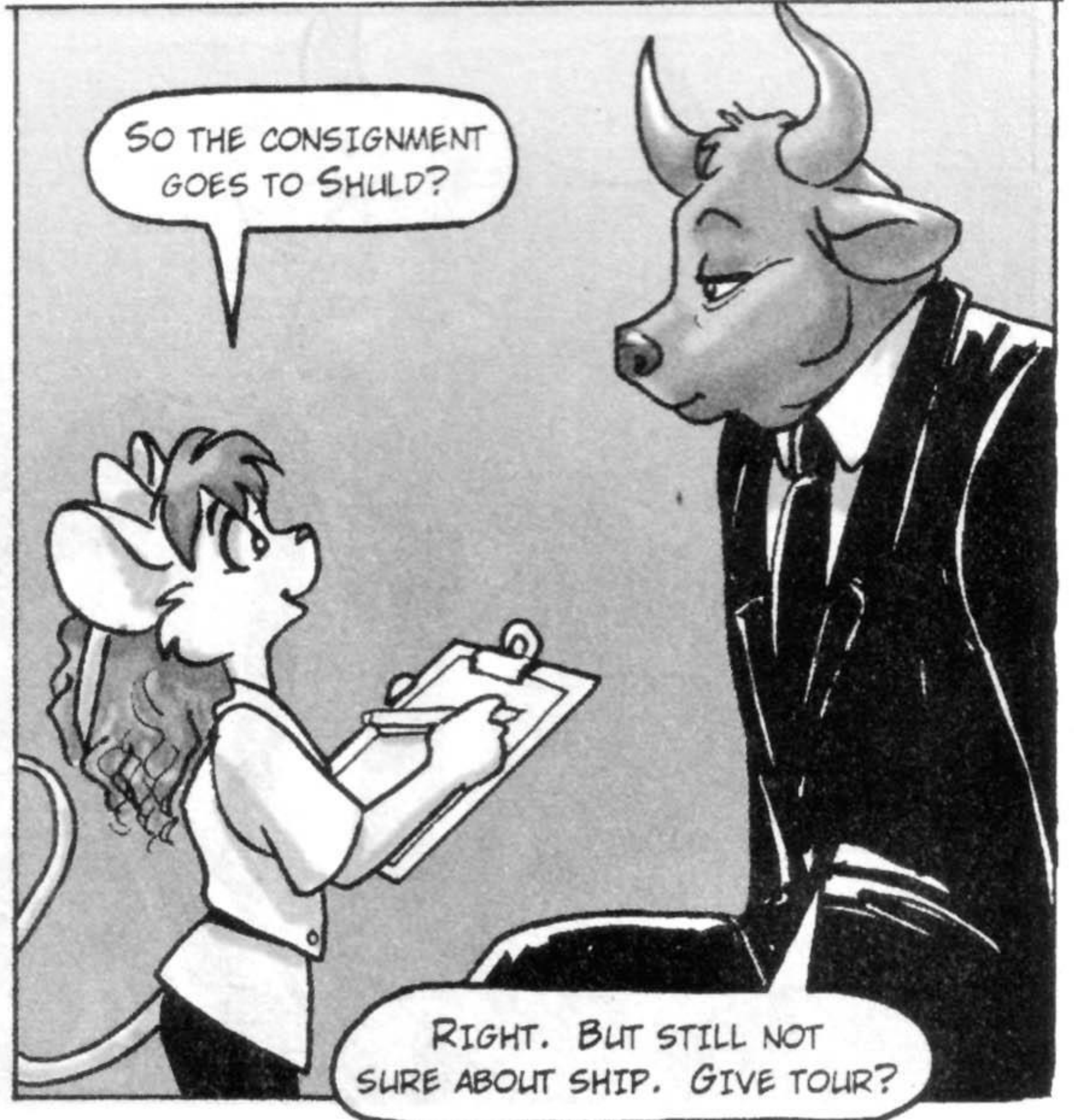
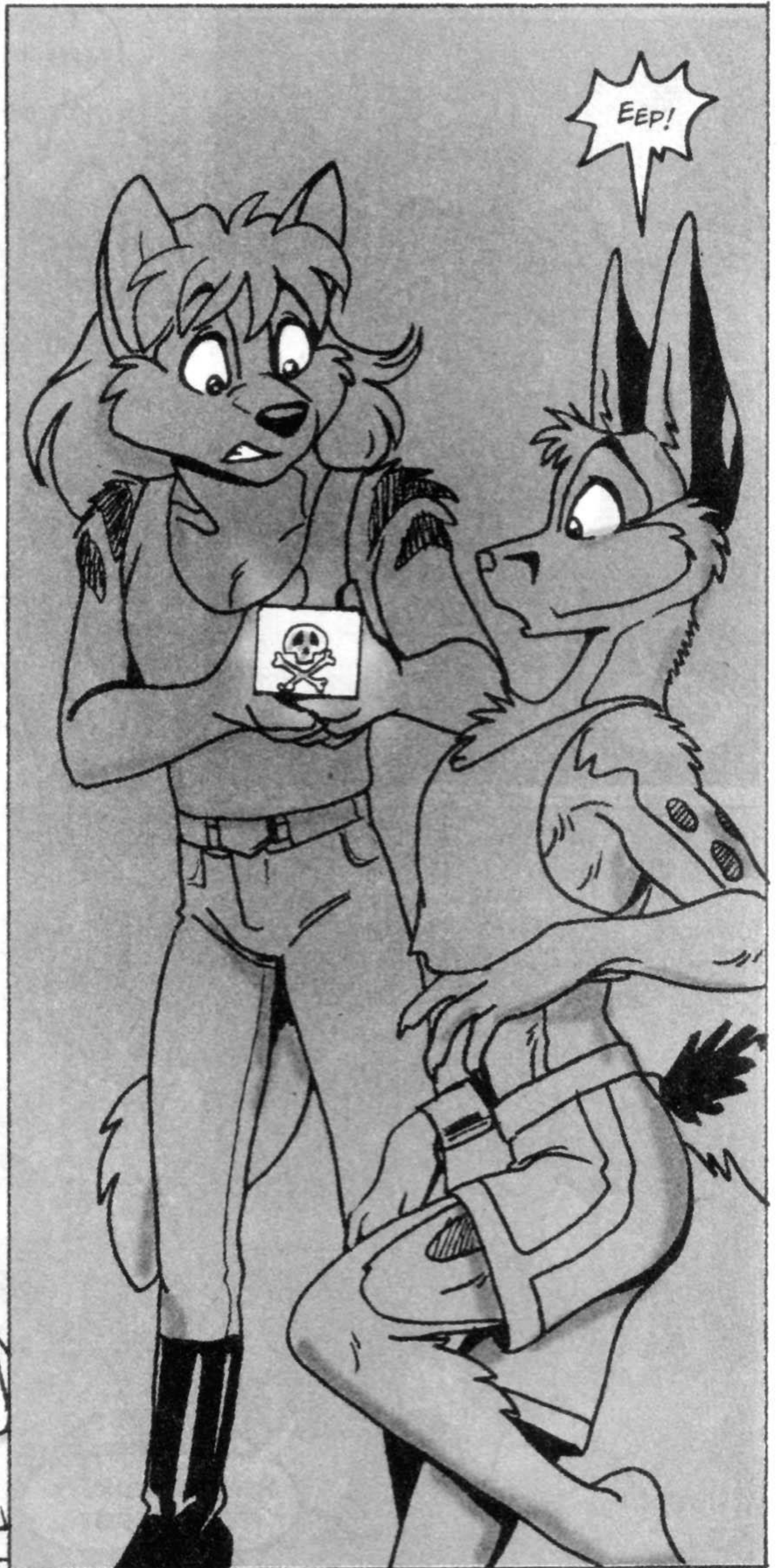


WAIT MINUTE. HAD
IT MOMENT AGO.



HERE IS!
YOU TAKE, NOW.

TREAT WITH
CARE!



GIVE ME HYDRO-FARMING EQUIPMENT ANY DAY! NO LITTLE SKULLS AND CROSSBONES TO DEAL WITH. WONDER HOW SAFE IT'LL BE HERE IN THE SHIELDED CARGO BAY?

OR HOW SAFE WE'LL BE, FOR THAT MATTER! I WONDER HOW RADIOACTIVE THEORETICAL PARTICLES ARE?

ALL NEAT AND TIDY?

JUST TO BE SURE, WE'LL GIVE IT A WIDE BERTH UNTIL WE LAND, AND I CAN RENT A PROTECTIVE SUIT. NO SENSE IN TAKING CHANCES.

YEEE!

WELL, I'LL FEEL A LITTLE BETTER WITH IT STASHED AWAY SO FAR BACK IN THE SHIP.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING DOWN HERE?

DON'T DO THAT!

JUST A FRIENDLY VISIT. YOU'RE NOT NERVOUS, ARE YOU?

NEGOTIATIONS ARE PRETTY MUCH CONCLUDED. MUMBO'S GONE TO FIRE UP HIS TAXI, AND LAMBIE'S GIVING THE YOKEL THE GUIDED TOUR.

IT WASN'T THAT, EXACTLY. I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU!

SO? NO NEED TO COME DOWN HERE TO TELL ME THAT.

OH, LORD. WHAT'VE YOU DONE NOW?

YOU HAVE A BIRTHDAY COMING UP IN A FEW WEEKS. I WANTED TO SURPRISE YOU.

ANNNND...?

I THOUGHT WE MIGHT WANT TO TAKE A LITTLE STROLL BEFORE THEY GET DOWN TO THE CARGO LEVEL.

OH, LORD!

IT'S NOT REALLY ANYTHING ILLEGAL, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.

THE THOUGHT DID COME TO MIND. SO EXACTLY WHERE IS THIS SURPRISE?

THE MAIN HOLD.

OF COURSE. WHERE ELSE? JUST GIVE ME THE TERRIBLE DETAILS. SLOWLY, PLEASE. I HAVE A WEAK HEART.

THE HOLD'S SUCH A DULL PLACE, YOU KNOW. SO GREY AND LACKLUSTER. IT'S AN INSULT TO MY ARTISTIC SOUL.

HOLDS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE DULL AND LACKLUSTER. WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT OURS?

THIS!

CHESTER...IT'S...ME!
A-AND...IT'S...

YES?

ANATOMICALLY
CORRECT!

TA-DAA!

IMPRESSIVE, ISN'T IT?
OF COURSE I HAD TO ASK
THE PAINTERS TO
EXAGGERATE A BIT....!

CHESTER! THIS IS A CARGO BAY!
THERE'LL BE PEOPLE IN AND OUT
OF HERE A HUNDRED TIMES A
WEEK! LOADERS! INSPECTORS!
THE PUBLIC!!

A 'BIT'?

EXACTLY, AND I'M
NOT GOING TO HAVE THEM
THINK MY DOGGIE IS
'AVERAGE'.

POSSIBLY YOU
MISS MY POINT!

<HEH-HEH> THAT
MIGHT BE A LITTLE
HARD TO DO, IF YOU
CATCH MY DRIFT.

WOULD A SIMPLE TIE BE
TOO MUCH TO ASK FOR?
JUST ONCE?!

HEY,
WOW!

OH...
NO!

NICE TOUCH. GIVES THE
SHIP THAT 'LIVED IN'
FEELING. MUST'A COST
YOU A BUNDLE!

'ZAT
ACCURATE?

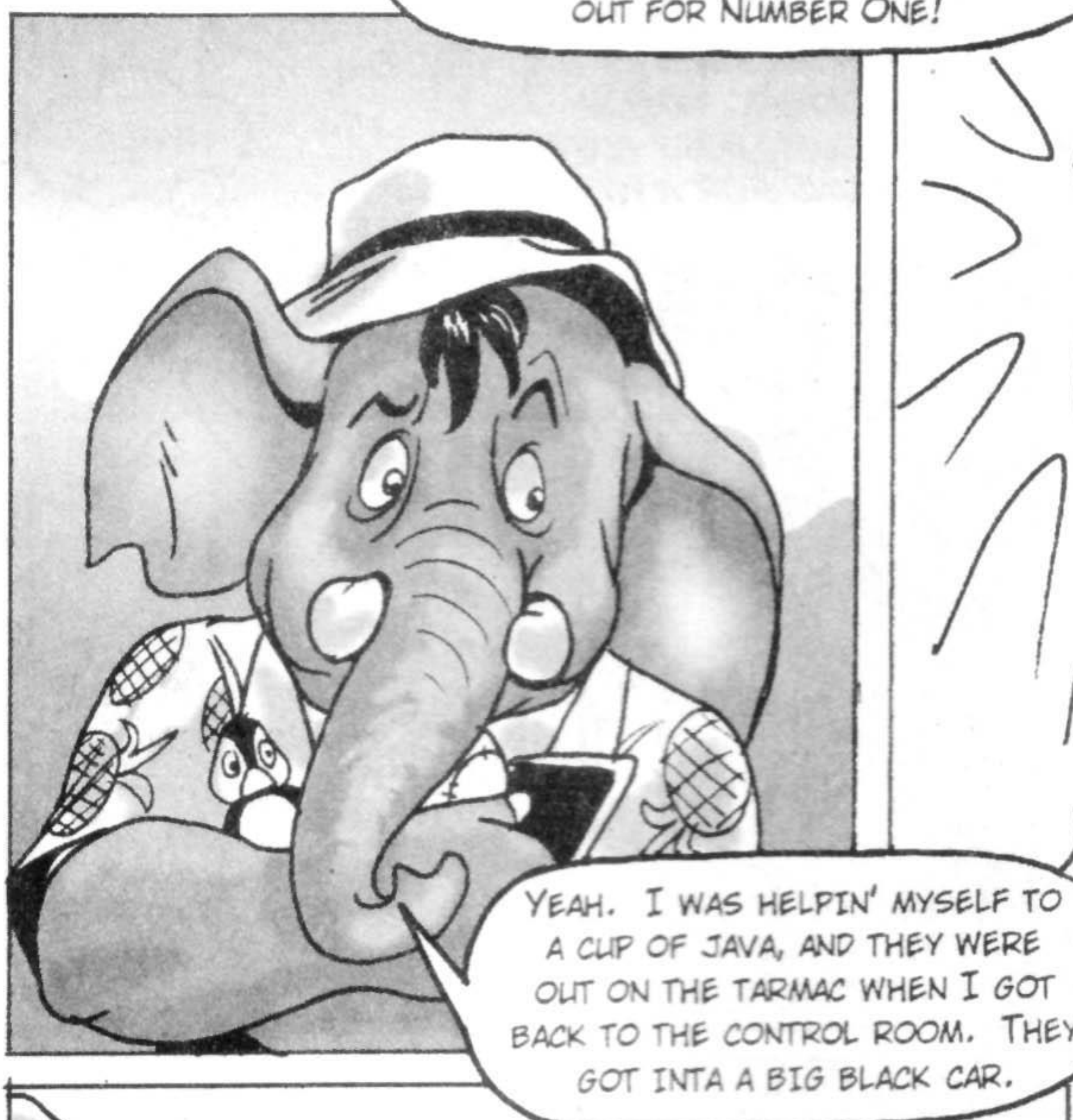
NOTHING'S TOO GOOD FOR MY
PARTNER! AND THAT'S NONE
OF YOUR BUSINESS.

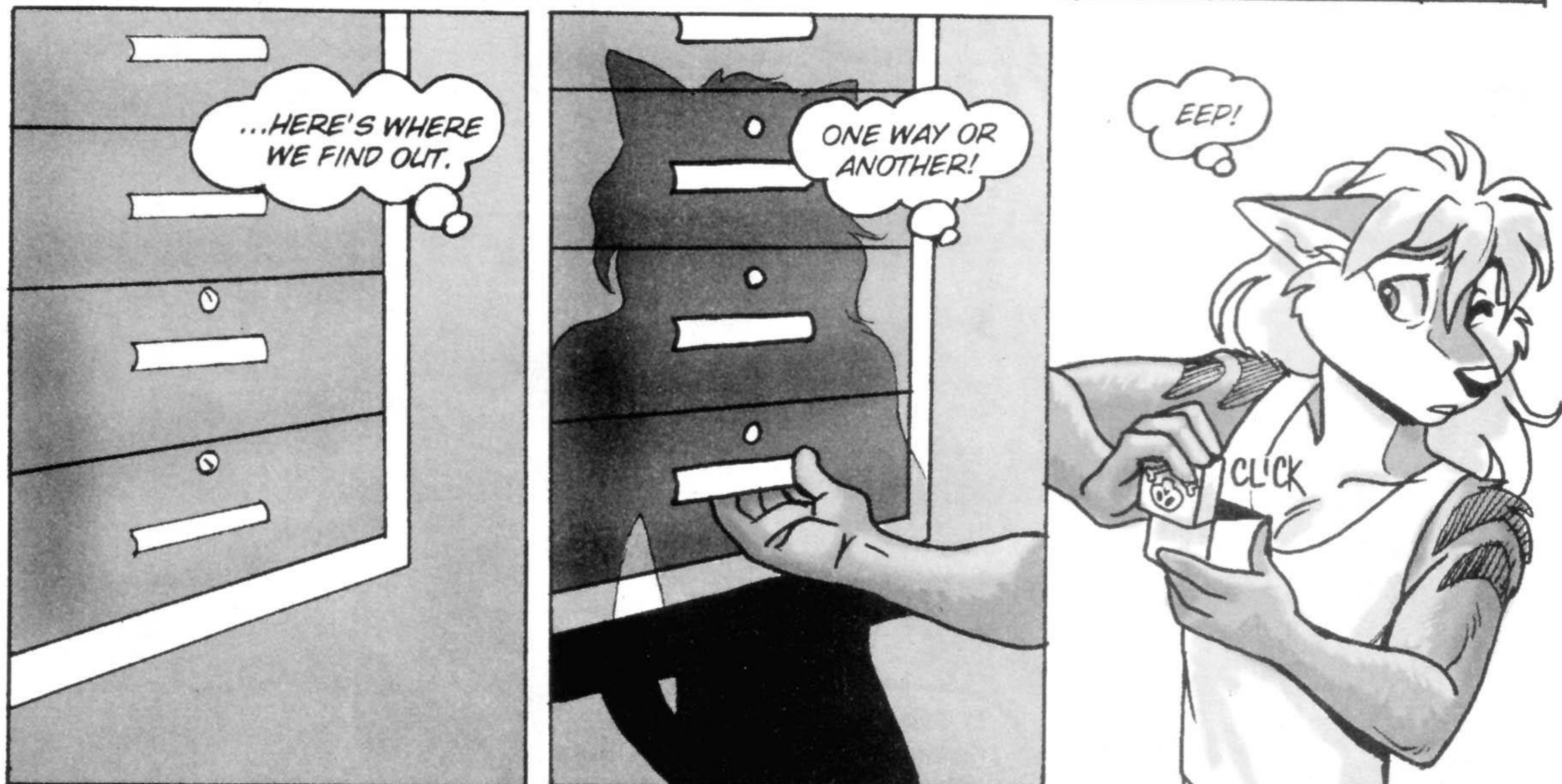
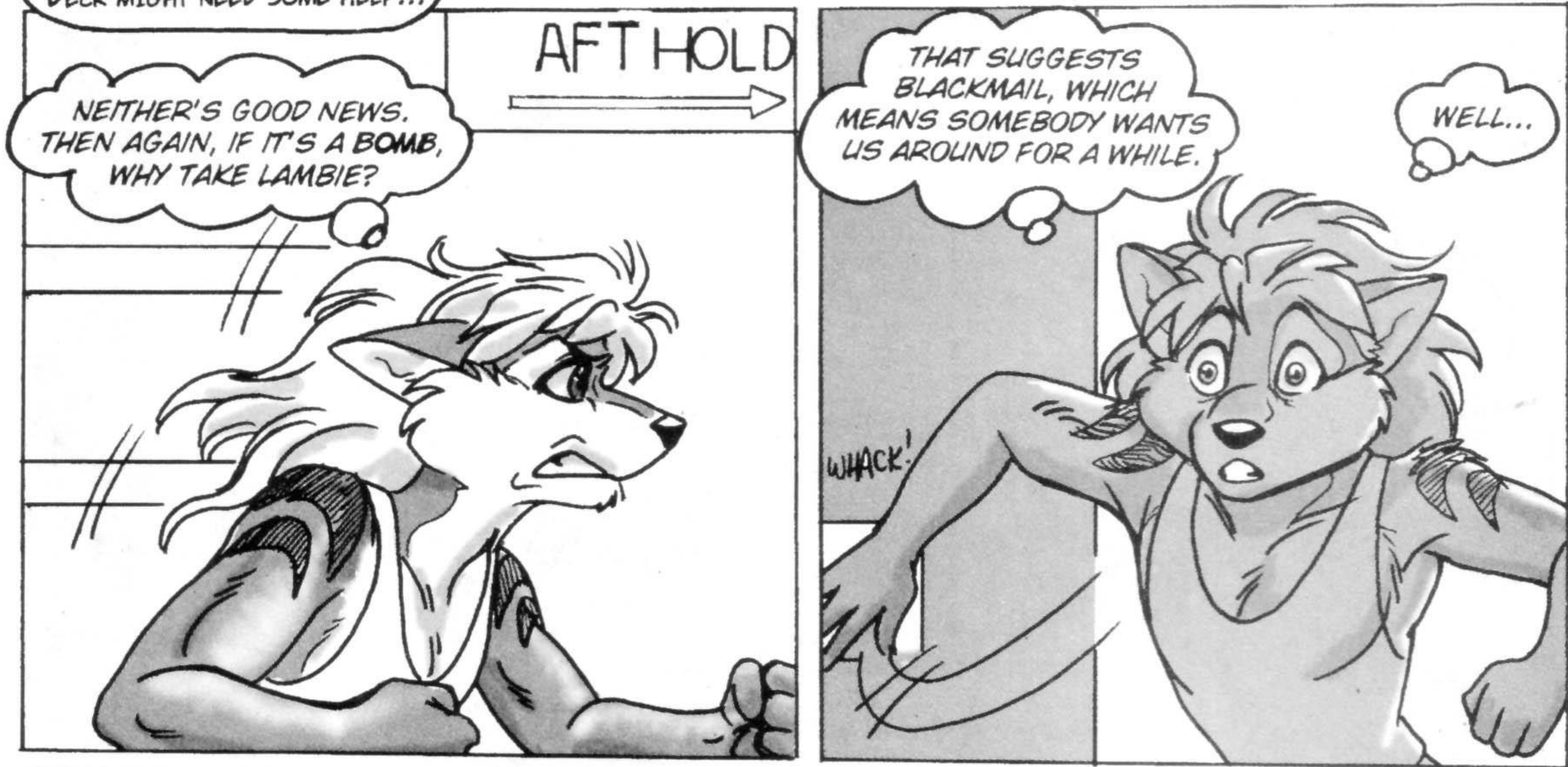
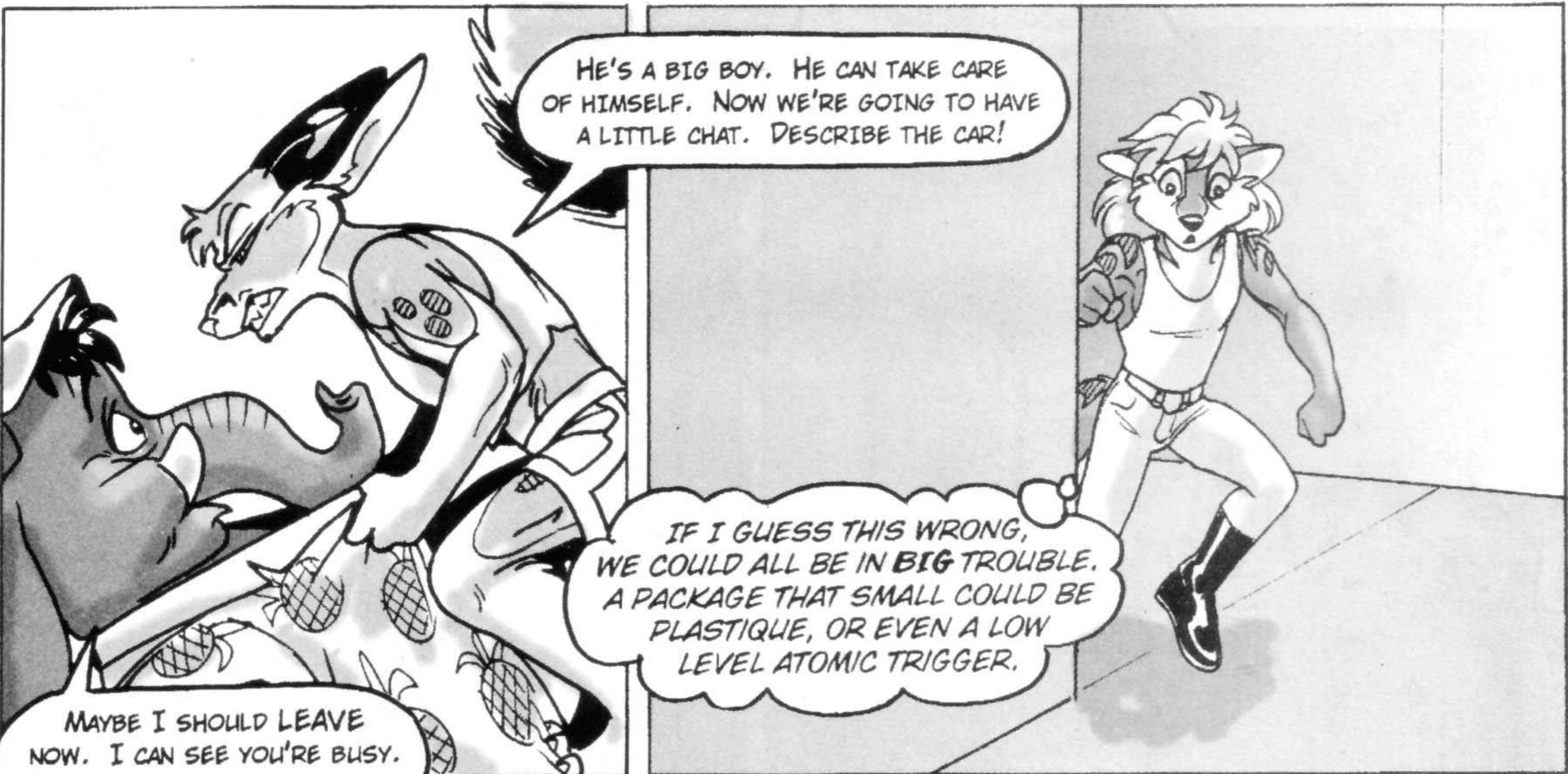
HE HAD JUNGLE FEVER! DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT HE WAS DOING, ALL RIGHT? IF
ONE WORD ABOUT THIS GETS OUT
BEFORE I CAN HAVE IT PAINTED OVER,
MUMBO, I'LL SKIN YOU ALIVE AND
SELL YOU FOR WALLET!

PAINTED OVER!
CHRIS! YOU CAN'T!

I'LL GET TO YOU LATER,
CHES! MUMBO, I...

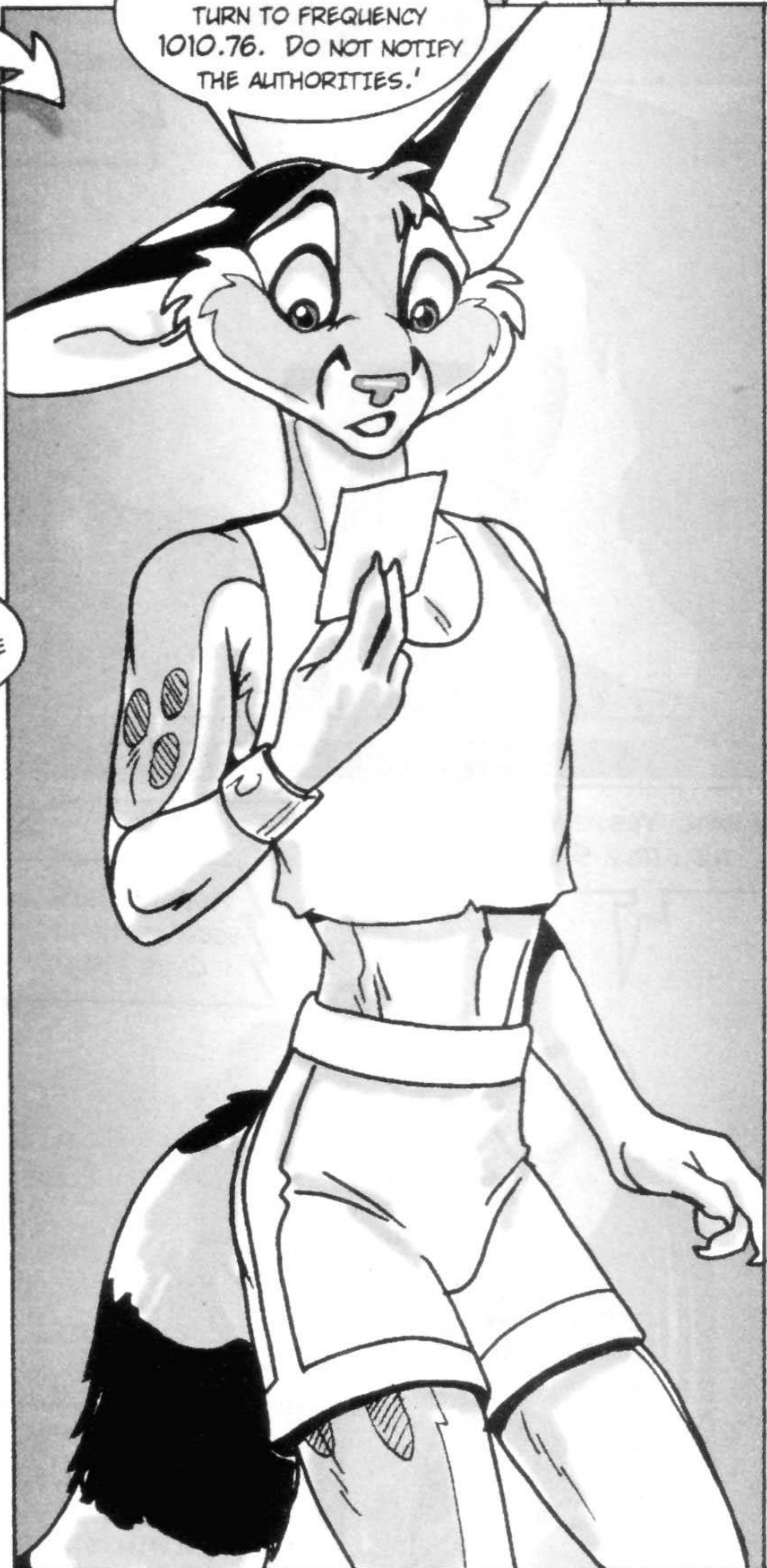
HUH?







HE WASN'T MUCH HELP, SO I SENT HIM PACKING.



YOU'RE GOING TO
TRACE THE SIGNAL'S
POINT OF ORIGIN?



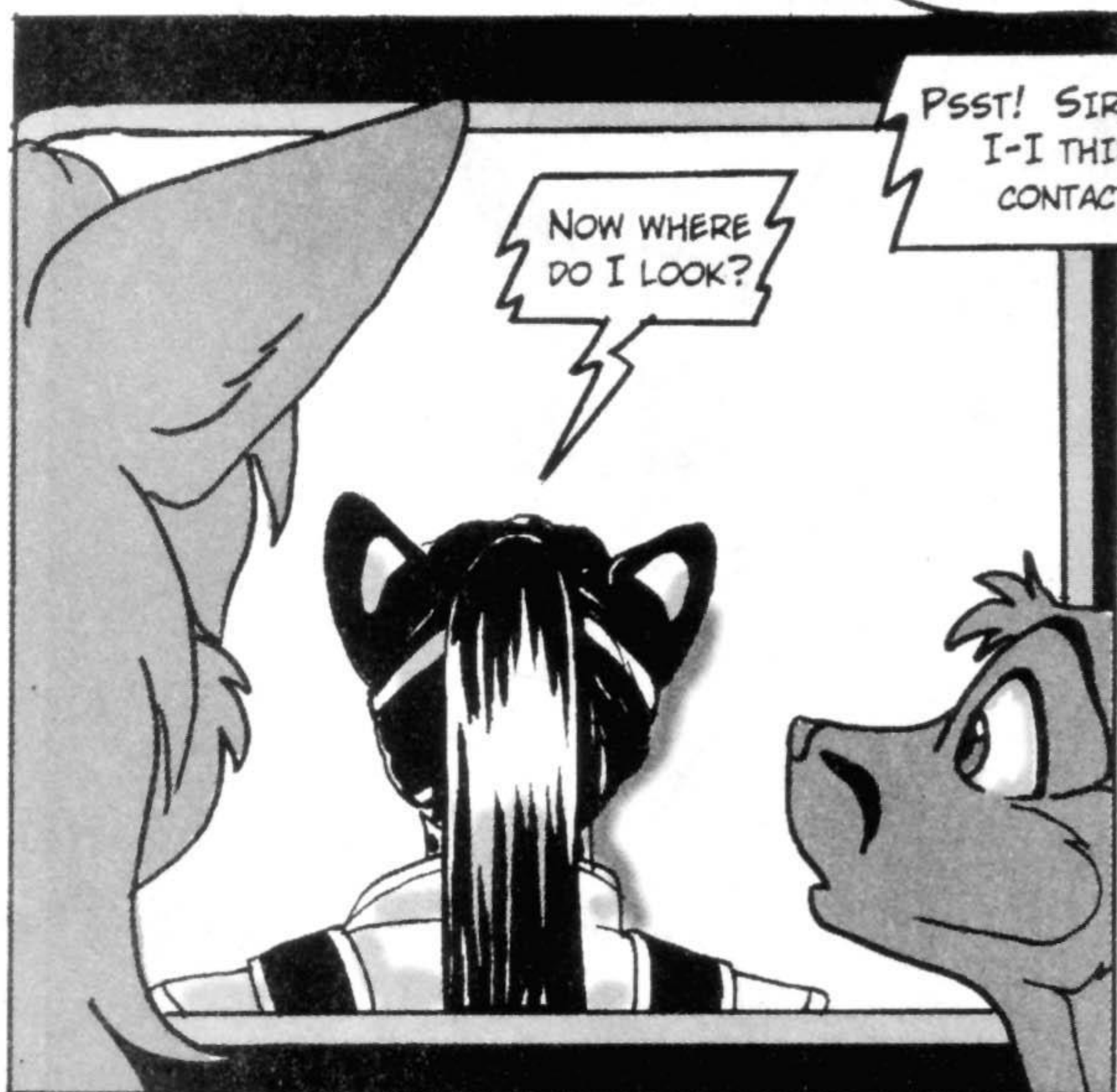
MAKES SENSE. THEY'LL
PROBABLY TAKE HER TO
THEIR BASE, WHICH IS
WHERE THEY'D PROBABLY
HAVE THEIR EQUIPMENT.

CHRIS! I THINK I'M
GETTING SOMETHING!



NOW WHERE
DO I LOOK?

PSST! SIR, BEHIND YOU!
I-I THINK THEY'RE
CONTACTING YOU!



HMMPH. YES. 'WE HAVE
THE GIRL. SHE...'

HSSST! GENERAL,
LOOK AT THE LENS!
OVER THERE!

WILL YOU JUST MAKE UP
YOUR MIND?! LOOK HERE!
LOOK THERE!



AHEM. 'WE HAVE THE GIRL.
SHE WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU,
UNHARMED. IN THE MEANTIME,
YOU WILL STAY IN YOUR SHIP AND WAIT.
WE WILL CONTACT YOU IN 48 HOURS!'

WAIT!
WHAT DO...





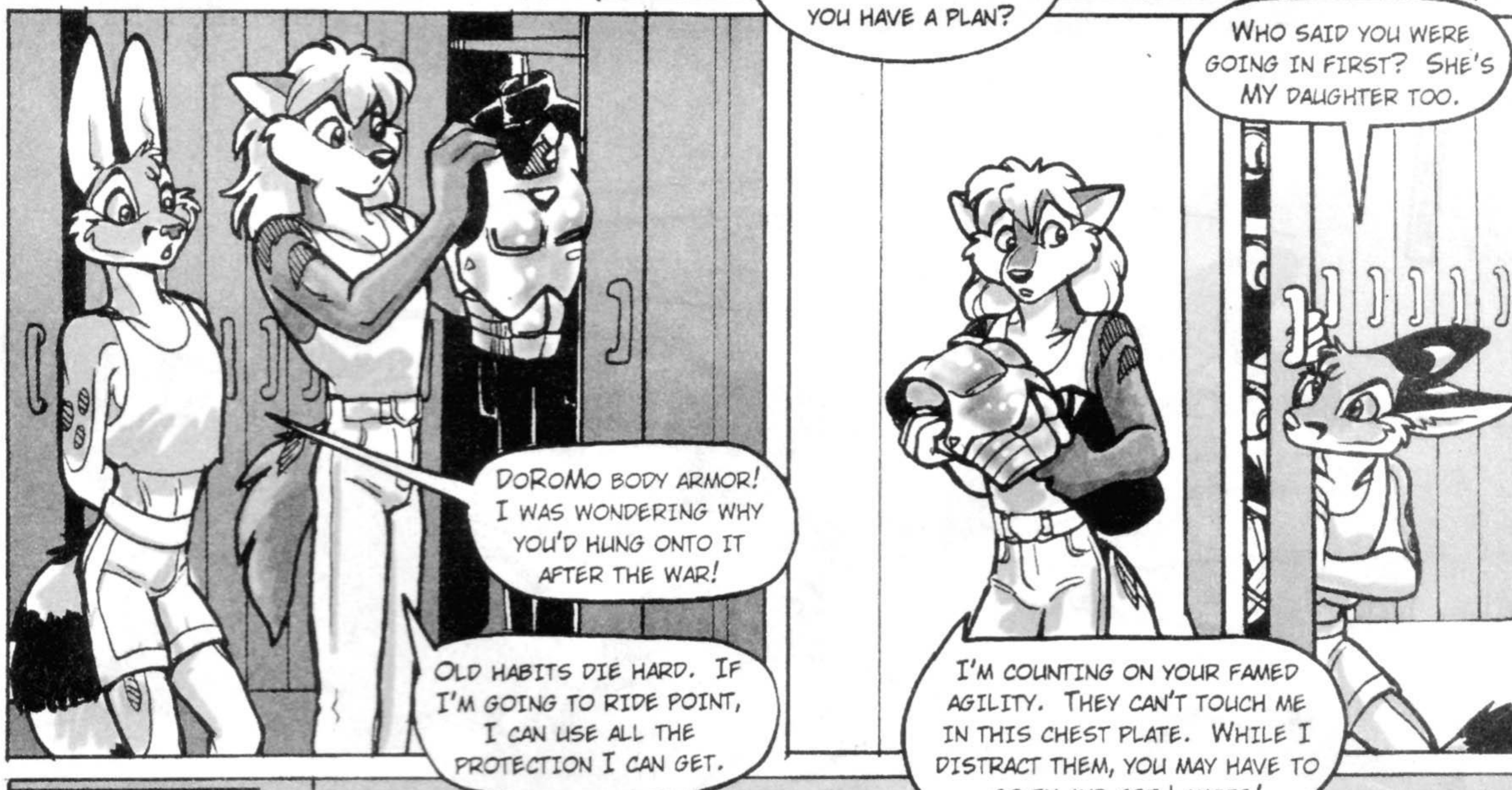
ORB, YOU GET THEIR LOCATION LOCKED IN?

60 MILES TO THE NORTHWEST, ON THE COAST. SHOULD I ORDER THE COMPUTER TO PRINT UP A MAP?

YOU ARE THE COMPUTER, BUT YES!

ROUND UP AN AERIAL SCANNER AND SCREEN. WE'LL NEED TO CHECK THE AREA OUT BEFORE WE GO IN. I MAY HAVE A COUPLE OF TRICKS IN MIND.

WELL, WE'LL NEED GRENADES. SMOKE AND CONCUSSION. I ASSUME YOU HAVE A PLAN?



DOROMO BODY ARMOR! I WAS WONDERING WHY YOU'D HUNG ONTO IT AFTER THE WAR!

OLD HABITS DIE HARD. IF I'M GOING TO RIDE POINT, I CAN USE ALL THE PROTECTION I CAN GET.

WHO SAID YOU WERE GOING IN FIRST? SHE'S MY DAUGHTER TOO.

I'M COUNTING ON YOUR FAMED AGILITY. THEY CAN'T TOUCH ME IN THIS CHEST PLATE. WHILE I DISTRACT THEM, YOU MAY HAVE TO GO IN AND GET LAMBIE!



MEET ME IN THE CARGO HOLD. I'LL GET THE CYCLES READY.

I'LL GET THE GEAR!

ORB, LOCK DOWN THE SHIP. NOBODY IN OR OUT UNTIL WE GET BACK!

RIGHT.

